

Barriers to the successful Implementation of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Inquiry October 2020

Sport Wales response

Sport Wales is the national organisation responsible for developing and promoting sport and physical activity in Wales. Sport Wales is the main adviser to Welsh Government on sport and supports the delivery of its strategic priorities through the Vision for Sport in Wales and the Sport Wales Strategy. We also distribute National Lottery grants to enable sport in Wales to thrive, investing in grassroots sport through our community grant schemes. We are committed to providing our most promising sportsmen and women with the support required to compete successfully on the highest stage possible. We want Wales to be a more active, healthier nation.

Awareness and understanding of the Act and its implications

- 1. Sport Wales believes that everyone in public life is required to get behind the communication of improving the wellbeing of the people of Wales, and there needs to be clear, consistent and simple messages to selling the Act to the public and beyond.**
2. We are fully committed to the Act and are ambitious to work with and support work which will positively benefit future generations, working with other public bodies to collaborate effectively, and not duplicating work. We set our Wellbeing Objectives aiming to ensure they become part of our DNA; a part of everything we do. In the development of our strategy and vision we used the Act to ensure that we use wellbeing objectives throughout high-level decision making such as in our Board Papers.
3. The Act has enabled us to frame projects, such as our work with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Public Health Wales (PHW) to focus on wellbeing through the Wales Physical Activity Partnership (WPAP). Additionally, bringing the [Community Sport and Activity Programme \(CSAP\)](#) to fruition which has been a project long-time in the making, aiming to work with all relevant parties within each region of the country to deliver sport effectively and to all. The Act gives our work a legitimacy it would be hard to acquire otherwise.
4. At Sport Wales, we would like to lead by example, and we are practically exploring how to react effectively to the unexpected, and still deliver positive outcomes. Part of this means shifting to an approach which uses narrative and reflection to learn from our experiences and using insight and evidence to understand the context under which events have taken place. We believe that there is much value in sharing our learning and working with others to embed this approach.
5. The Future Generations Act provides the framework in which we are able to work with innovative approaches to change and long-term sustainability. The Commissioner recommends the use of different frameworks which encourage us to think about what is no longer sustainable and what can be harnessed to deliver solutions for the future. Through our approach to investment, we have adopted a long-term method to prevent inequalities from getting worse, as well as tackling them, and we are working with the sport sector to upskill them and modelling long-term change.

The resources available to public bodies to implement the Act and how effectively they have been deployed.

6. **A lot of resources have been made available; however, they are not necessarily grounded in everyday language. There is a need to be able to connect to them and be able to act upon them simply. In comparison, for example, the 'Simple changes' are clear and unambiguous.**
7. There are some excellent projects such as the Three Horizons Framework and terminology such as the 'art of the possible' which aren't plain English for those who may not operate in a management framework. This makes it difficult for the easy cascading of information and ideas to people across organisations. As every person within a public body is as important as the Chief Executive to delivering on the intention of the Future Generations Act, this is an area which could be developed and improved.
8. One of the Future Generation Commissioner's main projects, the "art of the possible" was a resource that we worked closely with her team on. We seconded a Manager from Sport Wales to become a Goal Convener to work on the Healthier Wales and Culture and Welsh Language goals. This allowed for a transfer of knowledge between our organisations and meant we were able to bring back a lot of knowledge into the organisation about how best to work with the project.
9. The outcome of this programme was the "Simple Changes". The changes help to easily illustrate where an organisation may be able to adopt something small that could have a big impact. The Commissioner and the programmes have been the push required to get organisations to think differently about small but important choices on recycling, air quality and many more.
10. We are aware that prior to the outbreak of Covid-19, the Future Generations Commissioner was focusing on procurement and was undertaking a review into Section 20 of the Act. We believe that resources which may can support public bodies on procuring sustainably would be very welcome. As mentioned previously, in order for the Act to have the greatest impact, people in all roles throughout the organisation are going to be just as important as someone in executive level who is setting the agenda. Procurement, a way of buying from sustainable companies, is one of the single biggest ways of ensuring public bodies meet their wellbeing objectives.

Support provided to public bodies by the Future Generations Commissioner

11. **The Commissioner's Office has had regular contact with Sport Wales and is forthcoming with an annual meeting. We have found her and her team to be very visible and accessible, providing ideas and guidance on our wellbeing goals and the small changes we can make. The Future Generations Commissioner been a champion for the Act and has raised its profile; not being frightened to stand up for it. Her public profile has raised awareness of the Act and its potential.**
12. There has been good signposting to examples of both the Act being used effectively through the small changes programme as well as larger, structural changes. However, it would be useful to also reference examples of where things haven't worked. This could support learning and ensure mistakes are either not repeated, or shows how organisations might think about their own methodology for implementing such a change. It could also support them to be brave and learn from others' mistakes, enabling them to fail fast and without fear, and not to fall into the trap of 'we tried this and it didn't work', but instead to say 'we want to try this and if it doesn't work we will understand why and learn from it'. This is something that could be supported by scrutiny mechanisms such as the work of PAC when questioning public bodies on their actions, using methodology which would analyse what the body has learnt from a project which hasn't quite delivered but was aligned to the principles of the Act.

13. The Future Generations office is a small team; there is a need to be realistic about the resources available to provide support in delivering the Act. However, the support made available to Sport Wales suggests that the support can certainly empower Public Bodies to make positive changes.

The leadership role of the Welsh Government

14. **The narrative from Welsh Government is very clear that the Future Generations Act is a clear ambition that aligns through all policy statements and intents. The Act is, and provides, a great opportunity to think differently and to act differently. However, it is unclear if we are maximising this opportunity at present. A more joined approach across Government to the Act would ensure better involvement and integration along the sustainable development principles.**
15. Welsh Government published [its objectives in 2017](#) and it would be helpful to have clarity on their reporting cycles, as all organisations are at different stages of delivery. However, we believe an overly cumbersome reporting system could stifle the innovative spirit of the Act. A suggestion that might help public bodies to understand their duties further might be for Welsh Government to refine its guidance on the Act, including explaining in clearer terms the extent of the obligations on public bodies. A 'best practice' leadership approach for others to learn from, such as detailing where projects have been tried by not necessarily worked out but are within the spirit of the Act might help others to learn together.
16. The Welsh Government could further speak the language of the Act, and embrace the principles behind it rather than just focus on the legislation, however there are other elements of interactions which could be improved to facilitate the interactions of public bodies. There are many different levels to government business and still many decisions which take place at a singular departmental level. Being more in tune with the spirit of the Act, and confidently leading by example would mean the Government could better support public bodies, the private sector and individuals to live the sustainability principles.
17. Thanks to the approach of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, together with NRW and PHW we met the Minister for Health and Social Services and the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism to jointly discuss how preventative health measures and physical activity can be prioritised. We have also worked jointly with two Welsh Government Departments and other national bodies on the Healthy and Active Fund (HAF), pooling our collective expertise and budget to tackle physical inactivity.
18. The Welsh Government's leadership role could be impactful in recognising where programmes may not be having the desired impact, how we can quickly learn from them and move forward. Perhaps just as importantly, their leadership is required to maintain approaches through adversity (such as the current Covid-19 crisis) to ensure that not only are organisations able to be resilient and adapt to crises, but to recognise that for the Act to be truly transformational, out of the ordinary events should not derail a joint working approach. Nor should adverse conditions set back advancements in policy and programmes such as ensuring that physical activity is at the forefront of a preventative health agenda.
19. Similarly, the new curriculum provides a very similar opportunity for joint working and requires a forward thinking, joint approach which recognises that to deliver a transformational curriculum, it is not just the responsibility of the education department. The Act is about meeting the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future ones, and this holistic vision is at the heart of Sport Wales. The possibility of doing things very differently, such as situating the school as a community hub where physical literacy and activity is available to everyone is the kind of bold thinking that would invest in future and current generations, cutting across department deliverables.

20. Moving forward and out of the current crisis there are opportunities which cannot be ignored by this 'new context' we are now living in. To engage people and shift the narrative in the direction of doing things differently. Updated guidance on the Act could be provided now to ensure that organisations are clear about how they will meet the challenge of building back differently, ensuring wellbeing is met.

Any other barriers to successful implementation of the Act (e.g. Brexit, COVID, etc.)

21. **The main barrier to the successful implementation of the Act in terms of external forces is a lack of collective understanding and greater prioritisation of the Act. For example, instead of work to deliver against the five principles of sustainability being deprioritised, it is more imperative than ever to ensure the wellbeing of future generations is met. Future Generations commitments could be seen as hard to enact in the face of adversity and it would be easier to go back to doing what is familiar. Building back post-Covid and after our transition from the European Union must be grounded in sustainable development principles.**
22. Undoubtedly, there are challenges which a change such as Brexit will bring, and the pandemic which has shifted our way of living so dramatically in 2020 will mean that certain bodies may need to focus their activities to meeting demand or focusing on core activities which ensure people receive the services they require. However, the Act is law, and these barriers should be part of organisations' thinking when planning how they deliver their work. It is a shame that whilst some projects clearly have been unable to be delivered during the pandemic due to lockdowns or restricted activity, using existential challenges as reasons for non-delivery of the Act seems counter-intuitive.
23. As mentioned previously, we have worked in partnership with NRW and PHW on the HAF. This project is a good example of collective budgets, funding, accountability, scrutiny and reward around thematic issues which affect each organisation and impact on their core objectives. If more funds could be available for organisations to bid for in partnership, more progress may be made, and the possibility of duplication reduced. The potential of a wellbeing fund is one such example.
24. If it is possible to finesse how collaboration can be best served by the Act, the correct lines of accountability for delivery will emerge more clearly. Accountability is an important facet of successful delivery of the objectives in the Act. It is also worth questioning how individual commitments to the Act within organisations affect delivery.
25. The Covid-19 period has to some extent meant that joint working is not taking place at the same scale as before, meaning time has been lost when vital improvements and changes could have been made to improve people's physical activity. Our surveys over 2020¹ have shown that activity levels were vastly affected by the Spring lockdown and that though overall they have since returned to pre-pandemic levels, inequalities remain between men and women, those over 55 and of particular worry, children from deprived communities. As a higher rate of hospitalisation of Covid-19 has been found in people with obesity, the resilience of the nation depends on the continuation of integrated, cross-departmental and inter-body programmes. The necessary infrastructure to assist this change in operation needs to be put in place which will not only start to improve life-chances for the current population but is sustainable for future generations.

How to ensure that the Act is implemented successfully in the future.

¹ We worked with Savtana ComRes to carry out a survey of 1,007 Welsh adults in March and October 2020 to look at physical activity levels and what was affecting them.

26. **The Future Generations Commissioner's resources is undoubtedly an issue, as only so much that can be done with a limited team. As we outlined above, Sport Wales has found the support, resources and advice from the team to be invaluable. How this is made available consistently for all public bodies is a challenge. However, the future of the Act also relies on clarity, culture and leadership.**
27. The scale and pace of the delivery depends on individual organisations understanding the requirements set by the Act, buying into delivering it and how they lead together with others. Where work is committed to in partnership, clear areas of collaborative work and outputs must be agreed upon by each public body, and some ownership must be taken to ensure the work does not halt unnecessarily.
28. As well as accountability being stronger, with organisations being clear on what they have pledged to do and with clear transparency as to what has been achieved, a culture change is needed where organisations are encouraged to try new ways of doing things. The culture needs to allow staff to innovate without fear in case something new is not guaranteed to succeed, and provide an environment of trust and safety to enable staff to learn from these experiences. Not every piece of work or programme can have a successful outcome, but being agile and willing to take calculated risks, will encourage an atmosphere which is more conducive to delivery of the Act.
29. We are aware that future trends are also a priority area for the Commissioner. Using future trends work to try to understand what policy changes future generations will require is a helpful way to map services. We have written two reports in the last decade aiming to delve into trends around sport and physical activity and what future generations need to improve activity rates and access to sport. [Acting Today for an Active Tomorrow](#) (2014) and [Facilities for Future Generations](#) (2016). [The Vision for Sport in Wales](#) and [our Strategy](#) were also developed using these concepts. Working across sectors to develop our understanding of health and population trends within the sport space, has wider applications for other sectors.
30. In creating our strategy, we ensured that our Wellbeing Objectives and our Strategic Intent were one and the same. As a result, our whole approach to delivering the Sport Wales strategy is committed towards the Wellbeing Objectives we have set. This approach, which was supported by the Commissioner's office during the design and consultation stage, has helped embed the Act in our day to day operations, and others may find this useful to consider how the two can be aligned.
31. We have worked extensively to proactively harness the voices and expertise of young people within our work, and we have a young ambassador who attends our board meetings. There is potential for our Young Ambassador Steering Group to support future programmes with the Commissioner and her youth panel, or with the Youth Parliament.
32. It is clear that a public body's ability to meet its duties under the Act is down to everyone within the organisation. As we mentioned previously, procurement is a key element of sustainability; HR policies to alleviate poverty or ingrained inequalities; the ability for partners across organisations to work collaboratively for a healthier Wales, all of these and more are imperative in successfully enacted legislation. A nominated person in public bodies could be responsible for it, as there must be for the Strategic Equality Duty and the Welsh Language Standards, yet there is more that could be done to help all employees of a body understand how they can be a part of the Act's implementation. In some of the public bodies subject to the Act, there are nearly 2,000 employees. How every one of those employees can live and breathe the values of a sustainable future for all requires some creative thought. Linking the Act to leadership and management development within Wales, which can equip staff with the tools to better understand and implement the Act with confidence may be one way to do this.